DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 426 CG 024 354

AUTHOR Markus, Colleen; Seal, Justine
TITLE Stress, Locus of Control, and Age in College Women.
PUB DATE May 91
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (63rd, Chicago, IL, May 2-4, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; *College Students; Females; Higher Education; *Locus of Control; *Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

Stress is the result of demand placed on the body by either positive or negative events. Locus of Control (LOC) refers to personal perception of the cause of events and reinforcement within the environment. Previous literature has indicated that low LOC scores are positively related to low stress scores. This study applied these concepts to female liberal arts college students (ages 18-23 years and 23 years and older). Students were given the Student Stress Scale and the Locus of Control Scale. The Student Stress Scale listed relevant student events, in descending order of stress, that could have occurred in a 6-month time frame. The LOC Scale consisted of 29 pairs of statements concerning the causes of success, failure, misfortune, and political events. A Pearson Correlation between Stress and LOC produced significant results indicating a relationship between Internalizers and low levels of stress. The t-test for independent groups revealed significant findings between traditional and non-traditional age students on LOC scores. This study supports Rotter's findings that individuals who received low LOC scores experienced low stress levels and that internal LOC increases from late adolescence to adulthood. A reason for the significant correlation in this research is that the stress test was designed specifically for students. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED347426

Stress, Locus of Control and Age in College Women

Psi Chi
Colleen Markus, Barat College, Lake Forest, Illinois
Justine Seal, Barat College. Lake Forest. Illinois

Sponsoring Members: Paul Hettich, Barat College. Lake Forest, Illinois
Sandra Lema-Stern, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology

CG024354

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Colleen Murphy-Markus

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale and Rotter's I-E Scale (Locus of Control) have been popular paper and pencil measures. Stress is the result of demand placed on the body by either positive or negative events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Locus of Control, (LOC) refers to personal perception of the cause of events and reinforcement within the environment (Rotter, 1967). Low LOC scores, (internalizing events-personal control of event outcomes), are positively related to low stress scores (Rotter, 1967). Internal LOC is predominant in college level students and it increases from late adolescence to middle age (Rotter, 1967).

The present research applies these concepts to a female liberal arts college student population and predicts the following: 1) Students with low Locus of Control scores will have low stress scores, measured by The Student Stress Scale, a Holmes-Rahe based test of stress designed specifically for students (Insel & Roth, 1988). 2) Non-traditional age students (defined as ages 23 and above) will have lower Locus of Control scores than traditional age students (defined as ages 18 to 23).

PROCEDURE

Female college students were given the Student Stress Scale and the Locus of Control Scale in either Introduction to Psychology, Statistics or Behavior Modification. A representation of a 100, 200 and 300 level class was present. The Student Stress Scale listed relevant student events, in decending order of stress, that could have occurred in a six month time frame (i.e. "received lower grade than expected...argument with instructor...change in financial situation... "). A score corresponding to the stress experienced was given to each event circled. The LOC Scale consisted of twenty-nine pairs of statements concerning the causes of success, failure, misfortune and political events (i.e. "Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck" or "People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make"). Subjects received one point for every external answer they chose. Thus, the lower the score, the more the student internalized the reinforcement of life events.

Ethical procedures were followed. Subjects signed consent forms and completed the questionnaires. Consent forms and questionnaires were then separated. Once subjects handed in questionnaires, they received a debriefing letter from the researchers. This research was done based on the results of a pilot study conducted for an experimental psychology class. Possible corrections in procedure were made from the first study and a different stress test was used to test the college student population.

METHOD

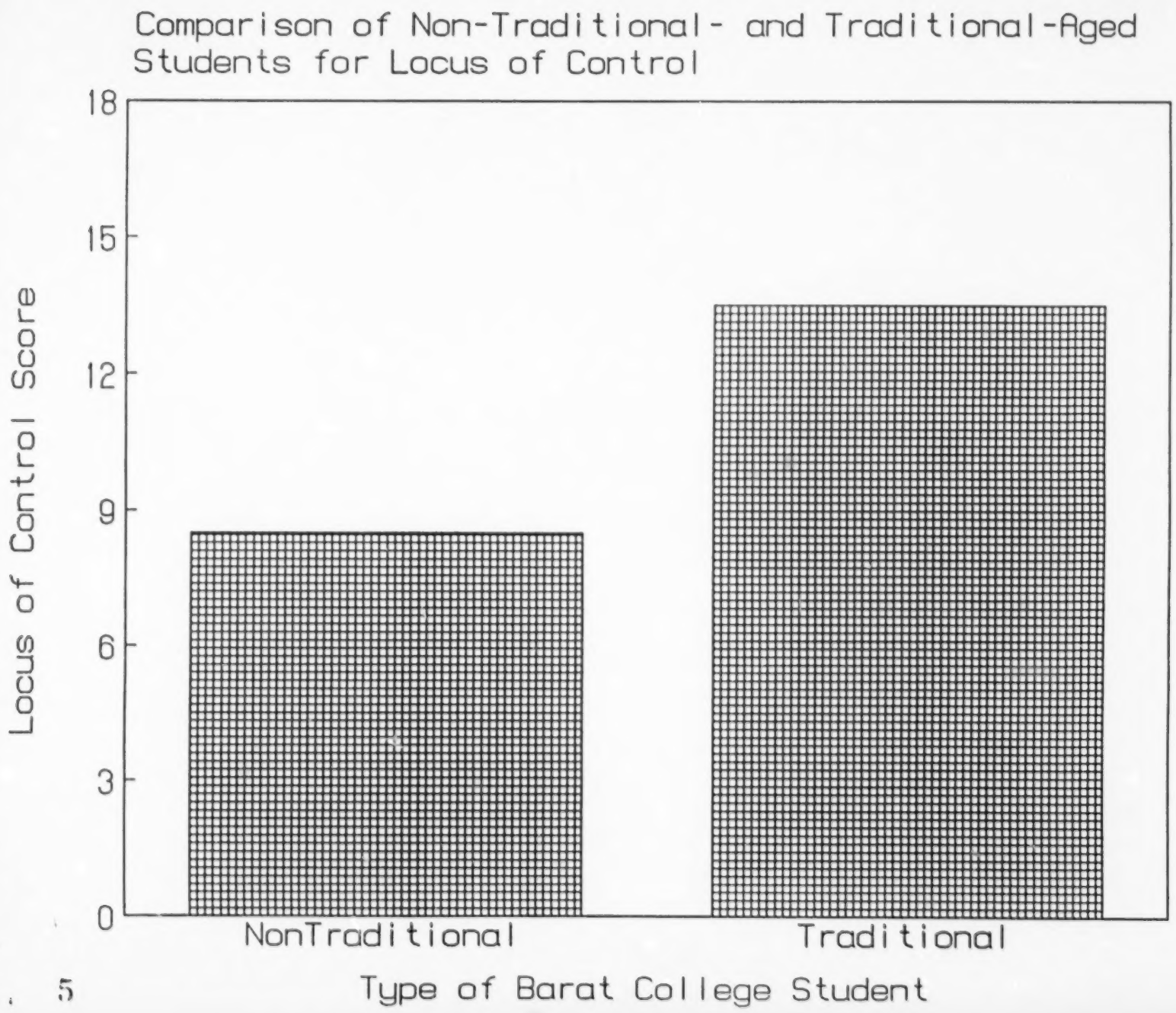
A Pearson Correlation between Stress and LOC produced significant results ($r = .45$, $p < .05$) indicating a relationship between Internalizers and low levels of stress.

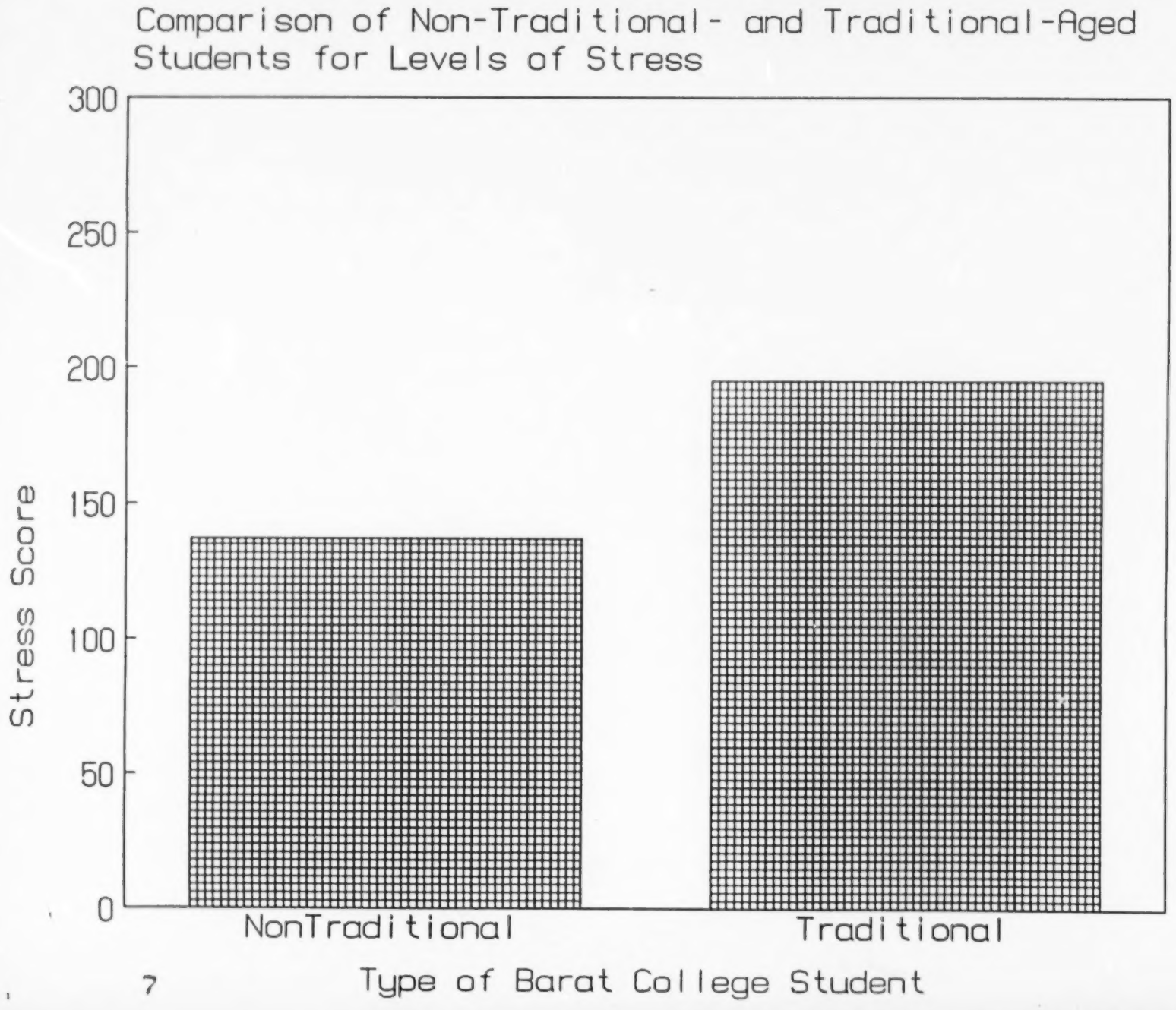
The t-test for independent groups revealed significant findings between traditional ($M = 13.5$, $SD = 4.8$) and non-traditional ($M = 8.5$, $SD = 3.6$) age students on

Locus of Control scores ($t(59)=4.20$, $p<.05$). Although not hypothesized, the t-test for independent groups also illustrated significance between traditional ($M=195$, $SD=97.3$) and non-traditional ($M=137$, $SD=58.31$) age students on stress scores ($t(59)$-2.27, $p<.05$).

RESULTS

This study supports Rotter's findings that individuals who received low LOC scores experienced low stress levels and that internal Locus of Control increases from late adolescence to adulthood (1967). A reason for the significant correlation in this research is that the stress test used was designed specifically for students. The life events were relevant to a student's life such as, "...change in academic major...increased workload at school.." (Insel & Roth, 1988). The Student Stress Scale should be included in future studies of stress in student populations.


Comparison of Non-Traditional- and Traditional-Aged Students for Locus of Control
Locus of Control Score
18
15
12
9
6
3
0
NonTraditional
Traditional
Type of Barat College Student


Comparison of Non-Traditional- and Traditional-Aged Students for Levels of Stress
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
Stress Score
NonTraditional
Traditional
Type of Barat College Student

REFERENCES

Holmes, T.H. & Rahe, R.H. (1967). The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 11 (12), 213-218.

Insel, Paul M. & Roth, Walton T. (1988). Core Concepts in Health. New York: Mayfield Publishing.

Rotter, J.B. (1966). Generalized Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement. Psychological Monographs, 80, No. 1 (Whole No. 609).